

Tawhid

The Qur'an is a complex and intricate book, and many people have devoted their whole lifetime to studying it. But if its message had to be summed up in just five seconds, it would be this, "*There is only one, perfect God*".

That very simple concept is known as Tawhid, and it's the most central principle in Islam.

The Qur'an's message is that the entire universe we live in is created and maintained by Allah, and that Allah himself is eternal, perfect and unchanging. Or, as the Qur'an says, "*He neither begets nor is born*".

What that means for Muslims is that there's really only one thing worth focusing on - Allah. All other things are just a distraction. And the worst mistake that can be made is to start thinking that anything that humans can create could be equal to Allah, or worthy of worship.

That's a sin known as shirk, and it's the reason that there are never any statues or images of people in mosques. Because if people start associating images with God, they might start worshipping the images themselves, which is an insult to Allah.

For the same reason, the Prophet Muhammad is never depicted in any way. That's not saying that that Muhammad was a god, or like a god, because of course that's impossible, as the Qur'an says about Allah, "*There is no deity except him, the Exalted in Might, the Wise*".

A prophet is a human being who's been chosen to be a messenger, and bring the word of God. So prophets should certainly be revered, but never worshipped.

There may be only one God, but he has many names. In some Islamic traditions, 99 of them. They include 'King', 'Protector', 'Wise', and 'Merciful'. Although they're not exactly names. They're ways in which humans can try and understand his many qualities.

Allah is all-powerful, all-knowing, and all-merciful, so it's not actually possible for human minds to fully grasp. Even if it is impossible though, it's very good practice to try.

The Shahadah is a statement of faith, and the first of the Five Pillars of Islam. It acknowledges, very simply, "*There is no god but Allah and Muhammad is the Prophet of God*."

It's often the first thing said to a baby at birth. It's said during prayers every day, and it's often said by people as they're dying.

Bitesize

In Islamic countries in the Middle Ages, it was even written on coins, meaning you couldn't buy a bag of onions without being reminded. That's how important Tawhid is.

And that's a big part of Islam's appeal. For all its richness and complexity, its central message really can be summed up in a sentence.